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ABSTRACT

New Jersey is unique as a State in that it has developed a set of objective criteria for defining its urban districts. The State Education Department has used these criteria to focus on the educational needs of urban districts. Organizational planning of educational aid to urban districts is taking place through three new initiatives: the development of the Governor's Task Force on Urban Community Education; the formation of an urban staff council; and the expansion of the professional staff of the county offices serving the schools of the urban corridor. The urban staff council has developed seven departmental objectives for the urban priority: (1) strategy development; (2) establishment of mechanisms for awareness and communiction on urban educational issues; (3) needs assessment and data analysis; (4) identification and promotion of effective urban practices; (5) establishment and expansion of effective technical assistance programs to urban schools; (6) research and evaluation of community education approaches to urban needs; and (7) development and implementation of special responses to special needs in Newark, Trenton, and other large cities as they arise. Projected issues and plans for 1978-79 include policy review and debate, implementation plans, and design or evaluation activities. (Author/MC)

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REPORT ON THE URBAN PRIORITY

by

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May 8, 1978

State Board Retreat

UD018366

N.B. This partial summary of our efforts in urban education does not begin to recognize all the efforts of the many department staff who regularly work with the urban schools. Their support and dedication must be noted even if their activities are not documented here.

OVERVIEW

The State Board should recognize that its adoption of the urban priority has set loose a great deal of commitment and effort both within and outside the department. The development of an urban staff council within the department and the formation of the cooperative joint committee of School Boards and NJEA are just two indications of that effort.

At the same time it should be recognized that the urban priority is not all that popular with some others. The indifference to our cities over the last 20 years does have real causes of both benign and malign neglect. But the past year has seen both a new federal and state urban policy. The Board's urban priority is consistent with such initiatives. With the expansion of our decentralized staff at the EICs and County Offices, we have a new capacity in place to serve the urban schools. The provisions of Chapter 212 give us a systematic approach to the discovery of discrepancies in all our schools, especially with regard to basic skills performance.

In the past year our efforts behind the urban priority have focused on issue development and clarification. The basis of a new partnership for urban schools has been developed. This was evident at the recent urban conference. Similarly, the county superintendents recently received a thorough briefing on the progress of T and E monitoring in 4 of the 6 largest urban districts. It is realized that there is no "magic feather" that can immediately be used to transform our urban schools. It will take a lot of hard work and extra effect.

In the year ahead the department and Board will need to address issues of community involvement, facilities, fiscal constraints and the evaluation and development of old and new systems of technical assistance.

I. INTRODUCTION

New Jersey is unique as a State in that it has developed a set of objective criteria for defining its urban districts. These criteria qualify municipalities for "urban aid" from the Department of Community Affairs. A "Qualifying municipality" means a municipality in which:

Population exceeds 15,000 and
The number of ADC children exceeds 350, and
There exists publicly financed housing, and
The municipality's equalized tax rate exceeds the State equalized tax rate, and
The municipality's equalized valuation per capita is less than the State equalized valuation per capita.

Other departments including Education have used these criteria to focus or target its urban efforts. Table 1 shows the 28 districts which form the basis of this direction. These communities range in size from Newark with a population of about 382,414 to Asbury Park with 16,533 residents.

Most people are unaware of the intensity of the density in New Jersey. Although its overall density of almost 1,000 per square mile is the highest in the county, the actual density in some of the smaller cities reaches 45,000 per square mile in West New York and 41,000 in Union City. Hoboken's density is 35,000 per square mile while in Irvington and East Orange, the figure is 20,000. For the six largest cities the rang is 10,000-17,000.

Table 1

NEW JERSEY URBAN AID CITIES (28)

EIC Northeast (13)

Essex County
- East Orange
- Irvington
- Montclair
- Newark
- Orange

Hudson County
- Bayonne
- Hoboken
- Jersey City
- North Bergen
- Union City
- West New York

Union County
- Elizabeth
- Plainfield

EIC Northwest (3)

Passaic County
- Passaic
- Paterson

Warren County
- Phillipsburg

EIC Central (7)

Mercer County
- Trenton

Middlesex County
- New Brunswick
- Perth Amboy

Monmouth County
- Asbury Park
- Long Branch
- Neptune

Ocean County
- Lakewood

EIC South (5)

Atlantic County
- Atlantic City

Camden County
- Camden

Cumberland County
- Bridgeton
- Millville
- Vineland

These urban districts contain about 28 percent of the total population of New Jersey (2million out of 7 million). These districts contain about 427,000 school age population (6 to 17) or about 24 percent. About 375,000 of these are enrolled in the public schools.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

The original language of the urban priority is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Priority I:

Focus on the unique educational needs of urban districts

It is a priority to focus upon the unique and extraordinary educational needs of Urban New Jersey. The concerns include the need to provide more effective technical assistance to the districts and schools of those cities which have the greatest educational need. There is also a need to involve the local educators in cities in the identification of effective and successful Urban education practices. There is also a need to deal with such related issues as racial and cultural isolation and communication. This is especially true for New Jersey's bilingual population. A review of the impact of the fiscal equalization of Chapter 212, upon cities is needed. There are also concerns with the general area of Urban community education. These include: the concern to increase community service and participation for both pre-school and post-school individuals, the need to develop models for parental involvement in inner city areas, the need to keep schools open for community use, greater public use of school libraries especially high school libraries, the use of the school as the central point of community activity and cultural life, etc.

In an organizational sense there have been three important new initiatives. The most significant new initiative in urban education is the development of the Governor's Task Force on Urban Community Education. The Task Force, headed by Dean George Harris of Trenton State College has met six times and has a timetable which should generate a final report by mid-summer.

A second initiative has been the formation of an urban staff council which has brought together the urban-oriented staff from the county offices, EICs and central office programs. This council has divided into 4 working committees. These are:

—urban needs assessment - Joel Bloom
—developmental issues - Bob Swissler
—interagency - Len Sains
—monitoring and technical assistance - Howard White

Much of the work for the second urban education conference was performed by members of the urban staff council under the coordination of Dr. Bernard Upshur of the Urban R&D Institute at EIC-NE.

The third organization initiative was the dramatic expansion of the professional staff of the county offices serving the schools of the urban corridor. In the six most urban counties of Essex, Hudson, Union, Mercer, Middlesex and Camden, the professional staff increased to 71 in 1978 from 12 in 1975. In Essex County alone the number of professional staff increased to 16 in 1978 from 1 in 1975.

The monitoring of urban schools through the county offices is an innovative activity which requires more recognition and analysis. The Newark intervention by itself requires some analysis and evaluation. A small evaluation contract to review the Newark performance monitoring in order to determine its "lessons" for other urban counties has been completed and will be available soon.

The Essex County Office has a five-member team which monitors exclusively in the Newark Public School System. By the end of May, 1978, each of the 85 schools will have been monitored five times. During the monitoring visitations, the team is concerend with the implementation of the rules and regulations relative to T&E and special education, school and district compliance with Newark's 1977-78 S.C.E. Application, the inspection of physical facilities, and the approval of substandard (temporary) classrooms.

With the successful implementation and monitoring of the T&E process now in process, the department is ready to focus its new and expanded capabilities on urban and other high need schools.

III. PRIORITY PLANNING

The 40 or so members of the department's urban staff council have developed 7 departmental objectives for the urban priority. These are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Department objectives for the Urban Priority

1. To develop strategies for increasing, mobilizing and/or organizing SDE and other resources to meet the needs of urban school districts.
2. To establish mechanisms which increase awareness and facilitate communication of urban educational issues.
3. To conduct research and analysis activities which will identify the needs of urban communities, provide an adequate data base, pinpoint policy issues and options and make relevant information available to urban school districts.
4. To identify and promote effective and successful urban educational practices.
5. To establish and/or expand programs which provide more effective technical assistance to urban school districts.
6. To research, evaluate and develop community education as an approach to meeting urban educational needs.
7. To explore, develop and implement strategies for addressing the special educational needs of Newark and other cities as they arise.

Each of these objectives can be discussed in summary fashion.

A-STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The major strategy for the past year has been the provision of management support and in-service through the T & E monitoring process. In each large city this has taken on different dimensions. In the year ahead we will work with Newark and some of the other large cities to design and implement a 3 to 5 year developmental plan which builds upon but goes beyond the annual T & E planning requirements.

A second strategy has been to focus on opportunities for inter-agency cooperation with respect to urban needs. The Task Force on Community Education has representatives from 6 other state agencies as well as from a number of urban agencies serving urban youth and their families. In the year ahead it is anticipated that the Department of Education will be strongly involved in the development of policies and programs by the Governor's new Cabinent Committee on Urban Development.

A third strategy is the attempt to mobilize support for the proposed $100 million bond issue for school construction which has an incentive provision for community-oriented plans. It seems to be the general consensus that the urban school facilities question is the major unaddressed question at the level of the State Legislature.

Urban centers need a substantial capital outlay to improve and replace outdated, unsafe, and educationally ineffective school facilities. A recent state survey of school facilities in the twenty-eight urban aid school districts discovered the following:

1. Forty-one percent (41%) of all currently utilized school buildings were constructed prior to 1914.

2. Sixty-three percent (63%) of all school facilities in the 28 urban aid districts are 50 years or older. (1929)

3. Only forty percent (40%) of the 278 school buildings, 50 or more years old, reported subsequent renovations of any kind.

4. The age range of presently operating schools is from one to 171 years old.

5. The oldest building in an urban school district was built in 1806 and had additional construction in 1931. It is an elementary school with 18 classrooms still being used for children in grades K-5.

6. Eight districts need from at least one to eight additional schools to service their school population adequately.

7. Additional schools are needed both to accommodate increased student enrollments and to replace substandard classrooms.

This problem of replacing substandard facilities in urban districts is an especially complicated one. Do we build new schools? Should new schools be community facilities with a variety of services offered besides education? Should we share construction efforts with health agencies or public housing programs? How do we mix building uses and site locations? Answers to these questions require further development. Table 4 shows the extent of new classroom needs in our urban aid districts. In the year ahead a new planning associate for

TABLE 4

SELECTED ASPECTS OF SCHOOL FACILITIES
IN 28 URBAN AID DISTRICTS[a]

LEA	NUMBER OF OPERATING SCHOOLS	RANGE OF DATES OF INITIAL BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	MEAN SCHOOL AGE	SCHOOLS 50 OR MORE YEARS OF AGE		CLASSROOMS NEEDED FALL, 1977
				NUMBER	PERCENT	
Asbury Park	5	1885 - 1971	57.4	4	80	22
Atlantic City	13	1897 - 1976	54.7	10	77	--
Bayonne	13	1898 - 1935	59.6	11	85	4
Bridgeton	10	1894 - 1963	37.4	2	20	--
Camden	33	1868 - 1970	54.1	22	67	33
East Orange	13	1873 - 1975	60.0	9	69	83
Elizabeth	24	1899 - 1971	50.1	15	63	18
Hoboken	8	1904 - 1970	50.2	6	75	--
Irvington	10	1899 - 1931	58.8	6	60	9
Jersey City	38	1898 - 1969	49.6	24	63	98
Lakewood	6	1912 - 1971	32.8	2	33	--
Long Branch	10	1890 - 1973	42.6	5	50	9
Millville	9	1906 - 1975	38.8	4	44	4
Montclair	14	1896 - 1950	57.6	12	86	3
Neptune Twp.	11	1898 - 1967	35.4	3	27	--
New Brunswick	11	1898 - 1964	49.5	8	73	--
Newark	75	1847 - 1973	66.1	52	71	204
North Bergen	7	1915 - 1965	43.3	4	57	12
Orange	9	1880 - 1973	65.7	7	67	--
Passaic	11	1895 - 1965	46.0	5	45	14
Paterson	34	1806 - 1975	58.1	21	61	55
Perth Amboy	11	1871 - 1975	56.6	8	73	--
Phillipsburg	6	1923 - 1975	24.9	1	16	--
Plainfield	14	1896 - 1956	48.6	8	57	3
Trenton	23	1881 - 1972	48.7	12	52	18
Union City	9	1900 - 1933	60.7	8	89	50
Vineland	7	1915 - 1962	35.7	3	43	57
West New York	7	1906 - 1970	54.4	6	86	--
Total	441		49.9	278	63	696

capital construction in R.P.&E. will be working on this problem. It should also be noted that enrollment declines in urban districts are below the State average rate of decline.

A fourth strategy has been the effort to target the departments resources and personnel to the improvement of technical assistance to the urban districts. In some cases the guidelines for federal programs do not make this an easy process. However, among our more successful targeting efforts has been the provision of basic skills technical assistance through the federal Right to Read program. Judy Rock has headed a special effort to upgrade the reading of students in grades 4-12 through Teacher in-service. At present, this program is helping about 350 teachers in 9 urban districts. A full report on "targeting" basic skills assistance is part of the report for Priority 6. In the year ahead each department program will be asked to develop procedures to target and improve its services to the 28 urban aid districts. We have also set up a special group of urban test coordinators. We are asking them to help us develop better procedures for using assessment to improve basic skill instruction in the urban schools. We will also be exploring the special problem of student mobility as it affects urban achievement.

A fifth strategy is the need to improve the provision of In-service training to urban principals. In urban districts with large number of schools, the problem of educational management is uniquely a building level issue. Numerous studies have shown that success in urban education seems to rest with the skills and resources of the urban principal. Associated with this strategy is the need to develop a strategy to improve the quality and quantity of instructional development support to urban teachers at the building level. At least one large urban district is exploring the possibility of developing "research resource rooms" in every school. In the year ahead the department has asked Mike Ross of Jersey City as chairperson for the urban superintendents to help us develop proposals for professional staff development in our urban schools. With the development of guidelines for "plans and programs for professional improvement", there is a need to radically rethink the problem of providing in-service programs to urban schools.

These six strategies, and there may be a need for others, should be the basis for implementing the urban priority in the next several years.

B-MECHANISMS FOR AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION ON URBAN EDUCATIONAL ISSUES.

The success of the 2nd Annual Urban Education Conference on April 18 and 19 is probably the best example of the success of our efforts over the last year. The beginnings of

a new urban partnership have been initiated. The Commissioner continues to have a regular monthly meeting with the urban superintendents. The regular meetings of the department's urban staff council insures regular communication and sharing between the disparite department staff who are working with the urban districts. The Urban R and D Institute at EIC-NE has taken on responsibility for (1) the development of an urban educational journal, (2) the coordination of an on-going urban needs assessment, and (3) coordination of EIC urban planning.

The department also provides liaison support to the meetings of the Urban Boards which are sponsored by the New Jersey School Boards Association. We also provide assistance as requested to the New Joint Urban Committee of NJSBA and NJEA which is chaired by Professor Leo Hilton of William Paterson College.

The Department, in cooperation with Temple University and Research for Better Schools, will host the 4th Annual National Urban Conference in November, 1978 in Philadelphia. The Association has chosen us over several other applicants in other cities. We have also provided position papers on urban issues to the White House Committee on Urban Policy.

C-NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DATA ANALYSIS

EIC-NE and R.P.&E. have collaborated on the development of an urban needs assessment which is an effort to pull together the fragmented data base on urban schools and to make it available for utilization and analysis. A number of reports will be available soon. These include an analysis of declining enrollments, school facilities and "cap" waivers in the urban districts. A partial list of publications is attached.

It is anticipated that in the year ahead department staff will be able to begin to use this urban data base for better planning and targeting of its efforts. A list of proposed reports for the State Board is being prepared.

Special concerns with urban education must lead to an understanding of the needs in Hispanic and adult education. In some cities (Camden, Hoboken, Union City) the percent of adults 25 years and older with less than 4 years of high school is over 70 percent! In 19 other cities the rate is over 50 percent. In other cities (Perth Amboy, Vineland, Hoboken) the percent of Hispanic population had dramatically increased, raising issues of cultural and language policy.

D-IDENTIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF EFFECTIVE URBAN PRACTICES

A major focus of the department's urban thrust has been the dissemination of nationally validated R and D programs to urban districts. With the success of the State Facilitator Project in 1975-76 in getting 24 of the 28 districts to attempt at least 1 and as many as 5 adoptions (or adaptations) of these programs, the dissemination project in the Division of School Programs with the cooperation of the EICs has continued this thrust.

There are however, two additional problems. First, we need a more precise analysis of the factors contributing to effective urban practices. At our request Research for Better Schools has commissioned such a study from Temple University. The initial results will be available in time for summer planning.

A second need is to develop a better tracking system of which urban districts are attempting what innovation. There is an expressed need from both department and district staff to develop some kind of interchange system. The urban R and D Institute is addressing this problem.

E-ESTABLISH AND EXPAND EFFECTIVE TA PROGRAMS TO URBAN SCHOOLS

With the "targeting" of program effort to the various urban districts, the department has realized that much if not most of its capability (both State and federal) is oriented to compliance and management support. Successful interventions in these areas creates a demand for additional technical assistance especially for instructional support. Under Chapter 212, the department has neither a mandate nor the fiscal resources to extend technical assistance beyond remediation.

It is anticipated that the work of the several groups which have been established to focus on urban problems will be able to more sharply define and project the T.A. needs of urban schools. From that analysis, we can more realistically project the resources required. There are indications that we must dramatically rethink over assumptions about in-service, and their applicability in urban schools.

It is anticipated that the urban staff council will meet quarterly to review their existing approaches to technical assistance.

F-TO RESEARCH AND EVALUATE COMMUNITY EDUCATION APPROACHES TO URBAN NEEDS

The work of the Task Force on Community Education includes an extensive account of the various approaches to community education and community schools. These reports will be available in early summer. An implementation plan for the recommendations of the Task

Force will be completed by the end of the summer.

Furthermore, exploratory discussions have been held with the foundation which has been the principle source of developmental funding in this county for community education. They are somewhat dissatisfied with their failure to substantially support community education in urban areas. Their projected 5 year plan which begins July 1 is being reviewed now for its utility in using New Jersey as a site for successful urban community education.

Another level of concern is the development of research and evaluation of various approaches of parents and community groups to the support of education and basic skills instruction at the building level. NIE has been approached to sponsor a New Jersey workshop on their recent evaluation of different types of community support groups.

G-THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL RESPONSES TO SPECIAL NEEDS IN NEWARK, TRENTON AND OTHER LARGE CITIES AS THEY ARISE

With the report of the Executive Superintendent at the April Board meeting, the remedial plan actions with Newark are essentially completed. A similar remedial action has been begun in Trenton. In both cases we anticipate a 3 to 5 year development plan for major changes in both their instructional programs and their facilities. In each case however, such a developmental effort would be at the initiative of the urban district with the department only providing technical assistance as requested.

Other developmental planning is proceeding in several of the larger districts. In the year ahead the department will response as needed. If a developmental plan is successfully developed for one city, it should be usable elsewhere.

The department also needs to continue to look at the problems of municipal overburden and the special problems of non-instructional costs (security, recreation, etc.) in the urban school budgets. The work of the Cabinet Committee on the Cities will also focus on related issues with the bigger cities.

IV. PROJECTED ISSUES AND PLANS FOR 1978-1979

Precise operational plans for FY79 have not yet been formulated. In some cases these plans will simply follow from what has already been initiated. In other cases new approaches will need to be formulated and designed. It is our conclusion that the quality and quantity of research about urban education is highly deficient. In part this condition reflects the intense preoccupation with desegregation over the last 10 years.

In general the department's approach to its urban priority needs to focus on the 5 P's. These are:

Principals
Parents
Physical Plant
Programs
Planning

T & E has introduced new planning systems to the urban districts. Our monitoring has triggered internal monitoring by superintendents and central office staff. New programs are available for adoption in the basic skills and other areas. New in-service systems may be required. At the same time the antiquated physical plant remains a serious issue. It is also clear that the quality of leadership from the building principal and the quality of support from parents and community are important determinants of educational success in urban districts with their high rates of economic, social and population stress.

In the year ahead we can project several areas for policy review and debate. These include:

(1) Municipal Overburden and the equalization impact of T&E.

(2) Urban School facilities

(3) Community education and parent involvement

(4) Problems of student attendance and mobility

(5) Bilingual and bicultural issues in several cities

(6) Others

At the same time implementation plans for FY79 are being prepared in the following areas:

(1) Implementation plans for the recommendations of the Task Force on Community Education;

(2) The further targeting and evaluation of the departments' program efforts in urban districts;

(3) An increase in inter-agency cooperation and communication;

(4) An integrated R and D plan including a designation of urban component of the mini-grant program;

(5) An increase in in-service activities with urban principals within the context of T and E;

(6) The development of a profile of professional staff development needs in urban districts with the urban superintendents;

(7) Plans for the improvement and expansion of communications on urban educational issues, both internally and externally;

(8) A developmental plan for Newark.

In a third area additional design or evaluation activities must be developed. In these areas there is much less consensus on issues, problems and solutions. These include:

(1) Evaluation procedures or processes for urban technical assistance;

(2) The design of an interchange or clearinghouse for new and effective urban school projects;

(3) The design of a new or improved delivery system for urban T.A. including perhaps the State Colleges and regional talent banks of LEA staff;

(4) An analysis of NIE research on parent and community support for instructional improvement and an evaluation of such ideas such as the parent contract, parent partnerships, etc.